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A Re-examination of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in a Political Society in the Light of the Principle of Human Dignity

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Propositions Associated with PhD Thesis of Getahun Alemayehu Mosissa, *A Re-examination of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in a Political Society in the Light of the Principle of Human Dignity*, 21 April 2020

1. The status and importance of a given human right do not depend on the manner or form of recognition of the right in a domestic legal system but rather on the nature of the underlying moral principle upon which it is justified. The special constitutional status assigned to some human rights, if any, is therefore a by-product, not the basis of their normative essence.
2. We cannot determine the essence of human rights based on what a duty bearer (such as State) should or shouldn't do. The conception of the ideal of free and dignified human being gives us a strong argument against the dichotomised view of human rights (i.e., the categorisation of human rights into negative and positive rights).
3. Whether the State is a panacea or anathema to the quest for the realisation of a dignified life is essentially determined by our understanding of the nature and function of human rights.
4. The beauty of human life and rights lies in its relationality. Human rights should therefore be conceived as normative abstractions of complex and dynamic human relationships in a political society concerning human's wider social, economic, cultural and political interests.
5. If every discipline should have a metaphysical justification, then that of human rights is rooted in the practical lived-experiences of human beings in a political society.
6. The fundamental human right to basic material conditions of life is as old as a theory of political (civil) society.
7. Human dignity can have multiple surface-level explanations but this fact does not affect the deeper normative meaning associated with it, that is, the ideal of respect.
8. The content and implications of the normative principle of human dignity (the ideal of respect) is a reflection of human being's consciousness about its vulnerability and wider environment and, hence, inherent neediness for security, care and solidarity.
9. A practical manifestation of a State's respect for the dignity of human being is how far the least well-off have a real opportunity to have a say in matters affecting their vital interests and to accordingly be able to hold those in power accountable.
10. Homelessness and starvation are aspects of State's violation of its aggravated obligation to respect and ensure a dignified life for all (vulnerable) persons within its jurisdiction on the terms of equality and non-discrimination.
11. In time of dire economic crisis, a dignity-based approach to austerity measures requires the State to increase taxation on profits and on above average salary earners rather than the withdrawal of basic social security benefits from the most vulnerable persons.
12. The principle of human dignity may signify the right of the a '*promovendus*' to complete one's doctoral research without undue stress on oneself and family well-being.